

**REMARKS**

Claims 1, 2, 4-7, and 9-11 are pending in this application. Claims 9 and 10 have been withdrawn from consideration.

The courtesies extended to Applicants' representatives by Examiner Miller and Supervisory Patent Examiner McNeil at the interview held July 11, 2006, are appreciated. The reasons presented at the interview as warranting favorable action are incorporated into the remarks below and constitute Applicants' record of the interview.

The Office Action rejects claims 1, 2, 4-7, and 11 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Takagi et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,165,590) in view of Solmi (U.S. Patent No. 3,628,989). Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection.

Claim 1 recites "[a] fine feldspathic earthenware comprising a body and a glaze layer ... an annular bottom ... wherein ... said glaze layer being absent on a surface of said annular bottom; said surface of said annular bottom being covered with an annular vitrified layer which has substantially no water absorbing property; said annular vitrified layer being formed of a composition that has a lower degree of refractoriness than said body and a higher degree of refractoriness than said glaze layer; and said composition being vitrified when said body is biscuit-fired, and said composition not being fused when said body is glost-fired" (emphasis added). Claim 11 similarly recites "... said annular vitrified layer being formed of a composition that has a lower degree of refractoriness than said body and a higher degree of refractoriness than said glaze layer; and said composition being vitrified when said body is biscuit-fired, and said composition not being fused when said body is glost-fired." Takagi does not teach or suggest such earthenware.

The Office Action asserts that Takagi discloses a method for glazing ceramics in which a first glaze is formed on relief surfaces of an article and a second glaze is formed on

non-relief surfaces of the article. The Office Action asserts that it would have been obvious that a variation of coatings may be applied to any desirable surfaces of an article.

As discussed in the instant specification, the present inventors sought to address problems arising in producing earthenware, including undesired pin marks on the earthenware caused by the pins used to support the biscuit-fired body in the glaze coating step (*see* [0005]), undesired adhesion to glost-fired articles of fragments from projections of a refractory jig used to support the articles during firing (*see* [0004]), difficulty in removing such fragments and resulting ground spots (*see* [0005]), and safety risks caused by such fragments (*see* [0006]). Besides the fact that such pin marks and ground spots mar the surface of the article, they are also exposed non-glazed surface areas that can be easily contaminated with liquids and particular matter, as described in paragraph [0006].

The present inventors unexpectedly discovered that such problems could be overcome by employing an annular vitrified layer on the annular bottom of the earthenware, such as recited in claims 1 and 11. The annular vitrified layer allows the annular bottom to serve as the support of the earthenware during the glazing step and the glost-firing step of vitrifying the glaze, eliminating the need to use the pins and jig as discussed, and thus eliminating the undesired pin marks and fragments. Takagi does not recognize the difficulties as described, and Takagi does not teach or suggest a product providing solutions thereto. Solmi fails to cure this defect.

Therefore, as discussed above, and as demonstrated in the interview, the use of the annular bottom of the earthenware as a support instead of the pins and jig during the glazing and glost-firing steps is part of the novel solution to the problems discussed above, which is not taught or suggested by the references cited. The other part of the novel solution is the composition and properties of the vitrified annular layer.

The Office Action asserts that the glazes disclosed in Takagi would have the properties of the glaze layer and the annular vitrified layer of claims 1 and 11. At the same time, the Office Action correctly recognizes that Takagi is silent as to the refractory properties of the glazes. The Office Action asserts that Solmi cures this defect.

Solmi is directed to a process wherein ceramic bodies can be vitrified with a glaze coating in a single firing step, instead of two firing steps. *See, e.g.*, Solmi at Abstract. Takagi is concerned with two glaze layers, a thick and a thin glaze layer. *See, e.g.*, Takagi at Abstract. Claims 1 and 11 each recite in part: "said glaze layer being *absent* on a surface of said annular bottom" (emphasis added). Takagi and Solmi both fail to teach an annular bottom being absent a glaze layer, and instead "covered with an annular vitrified layer which has substantially no water absorbing property." Because the vitrified layer is not a glaze layer, it cannot be expected to have the same composition and properties as the glaze layers disclosed by Takagi and Solmi.

As agreed during the personal interview, because Takagi fails to teach or suggest an earthenware including an annular vitrified layer formed of a composition having a lower degree of refractoriness than a body of the earthenware and a higher degree of refractoriness than a glaze layer of the earthenware, the composition being vitrified when the body is biscuit-fired, and the composition not being fused when the body is glost-fired, Takagi fails to teach or suggest each and every element of claims 1 and 11. Solmi fails to cure this defect.

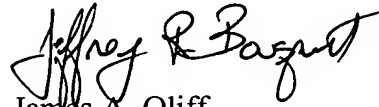
Claims 1 and 11 would not have been rendered obvious by Takagi in view of Solmi. Claims 2 and 4–7 depend from claim 1 and, thus, also would not have been rendered obvious by Takagi in view of Solmi. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection are respectfully requested.

Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of claims 1, 2, 4-7, and 11 are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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